

As We See It

What Caused Suicides? Answers Need Seeking

Why have two students committed suicide at UNC this year? We don't know. Possibly there is no one who can answer such a serious question off-the-cuff.

But it is obviously time to seek these answers — both to explain what has happened and to prevent such tragedies from reoccurring. There are several areas of student life which the administration has an obligation to probe in an effort to insure—as much as is possible—against this sort of thing happening here again.

For one, there is what is known as “student stress,” the mounting pressure which bears upon a student because of the importance of making high letter grades. The importance of grades-for-grades-sake has its roots in the so-called Protestant Ethic, and has become more severe in the context of the draft situation created by the war in Vietnam.

It is this pressure which causes students to get “psyched-up” over quizzes, papers and exams to the point of taking dangerous amphetamine drugs to stay awake for countless hours so they can study. It is this pressure which causes students to value a course not for what they can learn about it, but for what letter grade they can get for it.

And it is this pressure which just maybe contributed some to driving David Lee Bowman and Gregory Lister past the breaking point.

There is also the Resident Advisor system, whereby upper-classmen and graduate students function in a big brother sort of way for students living in residence halls.

That's how they should function, anyway.

Now this is not to say that the suicides are to be blamed on the two youths' individual floor advisors, for this is certainly not the case. It is the entire RA concept, instead, which we believe needs re-evaluation.

At present — and especially in the high rise residence halls which have suites instead of halls — advisors cannot possibly stay in close touch with the individual boys on their floor. The advisors have their own studying to do, and cannot devote full time to playing Big Brother for their charges.

And most of the time, happily, this isn't what's needed. Most students here, obviously, do not have serious psychological problems.

But what about the ones who do — who can they turn to? Sometimes, unfortunately, no one.

And when a freshman does go to his resident advisor, does the advisor have the psychological savvy to even recognize that the youth has a problem which needs attention? There's a good chance that he doesn't, mainly because RA's just aren't trained psychologists.

These are but two obvious facets of student life here which may or may not have attributed to the two youths' committing suicide. There are undoubtedly more serious—and far more subtle — areas which deserve attention and investigation.

We would strongly urge the administration here to immediately begin an in-depth study of the causes of suicide on this campus.

While steps, such as setting up the Residence College System, have already been taken to make student life here more livable, these two suicides within a four-month period tragically point out that there is still more which must be done—and done quickly.

India Starves, and The Awesome Predictions of Malthus Come True.



In The Mail

Drugs Are An Escape; Unwise Say Doctors

To the Editor:

The use of drugs — from marijuana and amphetamines to LSD, DMT and peyote — is now a major controversy. Psychedelic or “consciousness-expanding” drugs can provide experiences so impressive and profound that more and more people are looking to them as the most immediate and effective way to deepen personal insight and expand awareness. That these experiences are impressive is a well-established fact with us; we have actively followed drug research from its earliest roots and are thoroughly familiar with the enchantments of almost every facet of psychedelic indulgence. Searching for lasting positive value, however, we concluded that drugs constitute only a subtle escape from the conscious effort that eventually must be made.

Although drug enthusiasts frequently turn to Eastern philosophies and spiritual teachings for metaphors to describe and justify their psychedelic experiences, no authentic teachings or guides have ever sanctioned the use of drugs in the quest of increased awareness and enlightenment. Here the statements of Avatar Meher Baba are pertinent. Baba is a non-sectarian spiritual Master — living now in India — who is acknowledged East and West as the authority on higher states of consciousness. (For one, U.S. psychedelic spokesman Dr. Richard Alpert recognizes Baba's mastery in this field).

When consulted about psychedelics, Baba replied: “The experiences which drugs induce are as far removed from Reality as is a mirage from water. No matter how much you pursue the mirage you will never quench your thirst, and the search for Truth through drugs must end in disillusionment. Many people in India smoke hashish and ganja — they see colors, forms and lights and it makes them elated. But this elation is only temporary. It gives only experience of illusion, and serves to take one farther away from reality. The feeling of having had a glimpse of higher states of consciousness may only dull one into a false security. Although LSD is not a physically addicting drug, one can become attached to the experiences arising from its use, and one gets tempted to use it in increased doses, again and again, in the hope of deeper and deeper experiences. But this can only lead to madness.”

Our experience corroborates Baba's statement: drugs of any kind inevitably become a blind alley for self-fulfillment. To rely on external means is to ignore one's inherent capacity to realize his own greatest potential.

Allan Y. Coehn, Ph.D.
Robert Dreyfuss, B.A.
Frederick Chapman, A. H.

A Bad Be-in Bust?

To the Editor:

The “in” thing to do last week was to be at the Be-In in order to be sure to be in on that inning of being “in.” Well, they all struck out, if you ask me. There

Peter Harris

Summer Of Challenge



1967 will be noted for its race riots. The nation, wrought by increasing war and racial frustration, will sporadically explode this summer in the larger cities.

More than ever before, the uncertainty over Vietnam coupled with the hot hell of big city ghettos shall strike our nation this summer; the build-up towards this climax can be seen developing this spring. It shall be an outlet by both whites and Negroes of latent tensions blossomed through years of repression. The hopes of the black man need satisfaction; the htae release among some whites needs a spout to blast through.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Civil Rights Movement has reached an impasse. While legal-battles have been largely won, save open housing, the tangible gains promised for so long have failed to materialize. The discrepancy between promise and actuality is becoming a near-unbearable thorn in the Negro American's side.

Some tangible changes must be made soon in the largely Negro ghettos. There must be an abolition of unsanitary conditions, of rats festering in urinated halls; the draining of community resources by outside interests must be eliminated.

THE WHITE PROBLEM

The riots of this coming summer, however, will not be all black; many will be counter riots, due to the strange lull in the pressure on hostile conservatives.

The Vietnam war has drained money, attention and public support away from the Civil Rights Movement. Because of this, much pressure has been taken off the opponents of racial equality in the United States. These “conservatives” are finding their snide, bigoted comments less frowned upon this year; more people seem ready to jump upon the tension-blowing bandwagon, ready to vocalize latent hostilities.

The explanation for this let-up in liberal pressure is two fold:

—the alliance of anti-war, pro-civil rights has given the pro-war, anti-civil rights advocates an opportunity to yell “unpatriotic” at the liberals. When a man such as Martin Luther King links the war with civil rights (and rightfully so), he is condemned for being unpatriotic. The result is a threat to the freedom of protest; opponents of the war are condemned; so are civil rights marchers.

—secondly, the frustration of the war, the lack of cohesion in public opinion, has caused a major split in public sentiment over the moral question of U.S. intervention. This “war psychology” has tended to boil war hawks blood; they feel they have a patriotic excuse to give vent to their aggressions. This carries

over to animosity towards civil rights advocates due to their alliance with fellow peace advocates.

Therefore, the unfulfilled promises in the area of ghetto reform, plus the antagonisms of war spell an awesome threat to tranquility in the coming summer.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The capability for destruction due to these conflicts is very imminent. If the war is allowed to whip-lash public opinion and riots are allowed to develop without being stopped first, then the future not only for civil rights but for all American protest is in dangerous straits. The big question is whether American public opinion is ripe for a turn-a-bout away from the active, progressive direction which it has headed towards during the past seven years.

This columnist fails to see the swing under present circumstances. While I can certainly understand pessimism over the future of domestic America if the war continues its present course and if the tensions arising from internal conflict discussed above are not tendered, I do not believe that this will be the fate for our nation.

This destructive trend can be sidetracked through constructive activity in the slum communities. Through community adoption and governmental support of neighborhood reconstruction programs, the ghettos can begin to be rehabilitated. Despite this lack of funds, New York's Mayor Lindsay is attempting this redevelopment program with great enthusiasm and imagination. Other cities have failed to initiate this enthusiasm.

In other words, the more tangible goals need to be emphasized now. The incorporation of action instead of mere promises might be enough first to stem the tide of violence and later the reaction of negativism towards the civil rights movement.

If this can be achieved, then the Negro can fight the white man on his own terms, rather than on grounds which leave him open to charges of lawlessness and unpatriotism. He can begin to challenge the bigots in progressive terms while, at the same time, benefiting from better education facilities, improved living conditions and more powerful political economic influence blocs.

The pressure on the white man will be kept through earned respect. This, however, will remain a mere hope unless we, the people of America, once again begin to shun blind bigotry and support community development programs — not only tacitly, but actively.

The alternative is stagnancy, and that, of course is nothing but national self-defeat.

Those Misprint Blues

To the Editor:

“Is it true that people are really happy, but are afraid to admit it?”

Ah, friends, let me tell you about happiness.

Happiness is blowing your mind some weekday morning on a Peter Harris column. Happiness is generated from the comfortable repetitiveness from day to day or from paragraph to paragraph; it is stimulated by the vague metaphors, yet at the same time toned down by the reassuring “so to speak”; it oozes from between the semi-colons. I am placed with relation to God, Man, and the University, and am spared the inconvenience of “do-it-yourself” introspection.

The form of such columns is best described in terms of some kind of amoeboid flux, and the content is delightfully suited to the form. An altogether admirable example of such intellectual and indeed artistic achievement was the Harris column entitled “The Ordeal of Searching”. Reading such an essay in the early morning may be a rather painful experience due to the recurrent and practically undeniable urge to pinch oneself, just to establish the relation of all this to the pepperoni pizza you consumed before you went to bed. One continually expects Alice, or the Cheshire cat to appear. The idea contained in the title of this particular essay is reinforced by the ingenious distortion of structure. Specifically, the last sentence in the first column is continued in the third column, this brilliant juxtaposition leading one to believe that perhaps the second column contains the conclusion of the whole thing, but, in fact, the end of the third paragraph seems just as good (or perhaps I should say, just as reasonable) a stopping point. But the “searching” involved is not really annoying, because it is all

relative, any given paragraph fits in as well in one place as another. Peter Harris is indeed a consummate artist in using this subtle new technique, which is, after all, only a reflection of existential meaninglessness. Such artistry will necessarily not make much sense, as a traditionalist might say, but then why should the review of “blow-up” make sense when the movie was “absurd”? Absurd, absurd, absurd.

All this, as Harris himself says, “gives a person an opportunity to master himself to a degree which would have been otherwise unobtainable had the not been confronted with the dilemma of seeking. . . .” One would have to agree that the amount of “seeking” necessary to read Harris these days is more than sufficient, but I must enter a mild caveat here.

Don't try to master this stuff.

Just pick up your DTH in the morning, turn it to the editorial page, and jump in. Drift along through it for a while, or just skip around. . . in short, admire it, as you might admire a kaleidoscope. If you take it seriously, and are the type of person who worries about unity, logical development, etc., then you're in trouble already, friend.

Dan Wicks
528 Morrison

Letters

The Daily Tar Heel accepts letters typed and signed. We welcome open discussion by all interested persons. Our policy is to print all timely letters in the public interest.

The Secrecy Binge

Government — at almost every level from national to student life in this country — is on a secrecy binge, operating behind closed doors in “executive session” where it's a lot easier to get things done without any interference from that ever-so-pesky public.

And, admittedly, they probably have the right idea: if someone wants to effectively rule someone else, it's better for the Master that the subject knows nothing about what's “being done for him” until it's already been done to him.

A prime example of this occurred recently when the General Assembly's budget committee decided to close its doors to the press “for obvious reasons.”

And another example came to light Monday when The Raleigh Times carried a story about former-Chancellor Paul F. Sharp's letter of resignation which was sent to Consolidated University President William C. Friday, “was withheld from the full University trustees board and has never been made public. It was circulated only among members of the executive committee of the board.”

And now there is talk about moving the main Consolidated University offices from Chapel Hill to Raleigh—partially because of the criticism Sharp's letter had of there being “in reality two sets of administrations on the Chapel Hill campus.”

But what do most of the people of this state, the students at the four campuses or—possibly most importantly — the majority of the trustees know about the situation. Probably very little since the letter—and, indeed, the entire matter—has been shielded from public view.

Now fighting family squabbles inside the house instead of out on the town square, we admit, works very nicely — with family squabbles.

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The Daily Tar Heel is the official news publication of the University of North Carolina and is published by students daily except Mondays, examination periods and vacations. . . .
Second class postage paid at the Post Office in Chapel Hill, N. C. Subscription rates: \$4.50 per semester; \$8 per year. Printed by the Chapel Hill Publishing Co., Inc., 501 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill, N. C.